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PRESENTED HERE WAS A STUDY GUIDE FOR STUDENT USE IN A SEVENTH-GRADE LITERATURE CURRICULUM. BACKGROUND INFORMATION, STUDY QUESTIONS, AND EXERCISES WERE INCLUDED FOR USE IN UNITS DEALING WITH FABLES, PARABLES, AND SHORT STORIES. AN ACCOMPANYING GUIDE WAS PREPARED FOR TEACHER USE (ED 010 138). (WN)

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FABLES, PARABLES, SHORT STORIES

Literature Curriculum I

Student Version

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FABLES, PROVERBS, AND PARABLES

Literature Curriculum I

Student Version

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Introduction and Part I

Have you ever wondered where some of the sayings we live with in our language come from? What do we mean when we say "Sour grapes!" or "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched!" or "Don't cry over spilled milk"? Sayings like these have meanings that come to us from many different sources, but these particular sayings have meanings that all came to us from fables. Most of you know the fable about the fox and the grapes. This fable has been told many, many times, but the man whose name we most frequently associate with fables is Aesop. He collected them first in Greece a long time ago--long before Christ was born. But Aesop did not write them down; perhaps he couldn't write, since it is believed that he was a slave from Samos in Asia Minor. Aesop only collected the fables and told them wherever he went throughout Greece, pleasing people with these clever stories, some of which pointed out human foibles and some of which ridiculed or satirized human behavior. Indeed, it has been suggested that Aesop used the stories to express ideas it would not have been safe to express in any more direct way. When Aesop told the stories, he used man's ordinary language--prose, as we call it; but later on, when people wrote them down, they sometimes wrote them in verse. One of the first to write them down was Babrius, a Greek who was originally a Roman; his versions were written in verse form and were originally in Greek. The following is an English translation of Babrius' verse:

The Fox and the Grapes

There hung some bunches of the purple grape
On a hillside. A cunning fox, agape
For these full clusters, many times essayed
To cull their dark bloom, many vain leaps made.
They were quite ripe, and for the vintage fit;
But when his leaps did not avail a whit,
He journeyed on, thus his grief composed:--
"The bunch was sour, not ripe, as I supposed."

In order to understand the verse fully, you will need to know the meaning of several words: agape, essayed, cull, vintage, avail, whit, composed. You will be surprised to discover that some of these words have more meanings than you supposed, and you will need to be particularly careful in choosing the meaning that fits.

When you are sure that you understand what the verse says, write your version of the fable in prose.

1. Examine the fable in verse and the fable in prose. What differences do you notice?

a. How did your first sentence differ from the first sentence in Babrius' verse (lines 1-2)?

b. Notice the position of the subject in the first sentence of the verse form. Did you arrange your sentence this way when you wrote a prose story? How do the two sentences differ? See if you can find at least two differences.

c. Look at the last sentence in Babrius' verse. Do you know what kind of sentence it is? How many complete ideas does it express? Why is a semicolon used at the end of line 5? Why is a colon used at the end of line 7?

2. After looking closely at Babrius' sentences in verse and your own sentences in prose, can you find at least three ways in which the verse sentences differ from the prose sentences?

3. Regardless of whether they are verse or prose fables, how many parts are there in a fable? What are they? What do you notice about the characters?

Part II

Here is another well-known fable, this one in prose. (Perhaps you would like to try writing it in verse.)

"The Dog in the Manger"

(For selection, see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909, p. 27.)

Questions and Exercises

1. Read again the comment made by the ox at the end of the story. Compare it with the comment made by the fox at the end of "The Fox and the Grapes."

a. Why do you think the fox said that the grapes were sour? Was it a true statement? Who was he trying to convince? If a bystander had been watching the fox, what comment might he have made?

b. Was the statement made by the ox true? For whose benefit was it said? What might the dog have said?

2. Although the characters in these fables are animals, both stories are pointing up human weaknesses.

   a. What defect in character does the fox illustrate?

   b. What would you say about the dog's behavior?

3. Of course we all know that human beings are far from perfect. From your own experiences, at home, at school, with your friends, on vacation trips, or from what you see on television, or read in newspapers, make a list of some weaknesses of human character.

4. The first fable you read concerned a fox and a bunch of grapes. The second one was about an ox and a dog. Make a list of other possible subjects for a story.

5. From the two lists you have written, make a selection for a story you might compose. Do you need both lists?

6. Could you change the characters in this story? Some of you might like to rewrite the fable with different animals; and even with a different setting. Perhaps you'd like to rewrite it using people instead of animals. In rewriting the fable, which kind of subject could you change and which must remain unchanged?

Part III

"The Lion and the Mouse"

(For selection, see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909, p. 15.)

Questions for Discussion

1. Suppose the fable about the Lion and the Mouse had not come to Greece so Aesop could include it in his collection. Suppose it had just continued to be told in Africa until it was brought to America by slaves. Then suppose the fable had been brought West by earlier settlers from the South and had been retold here many times. What might the Old West version have been like? What animals might have been featured? What type of trap or snare might have been used?

2. Rewrite the fable in a completely different setting, either one of those suggested above or another one of your own choise.

Part IV

Aesop got most of his fables from among his own people, the Greeks, or made them up himself; undoubtedly a few of them had filtered into Greece from other lands, especially from Egypt. The fable about the Lion and the Mouse was found in its present form in an Egyptian papyrus dated 1200 BC! No one knows how far back into man's history these stories go, but surely they are very, very ancient! When man lived more like an animal and when he had to outwit animals to survive, he may have started telling these stories. Sometimes, even now when "the big one gets away" he seems smarter than we are, and we can very easily imagine his telling us what he thinks of us!

We did not get all of our fables from Aesop and from Greece, then; even in the Greek collection, there are a few from other lands. Another country and another collector besides Greece and Aesop have given us many more fables. This country is India, and this fabulist is Pilpay or Bidpai. The people in the western part of India wandered down there from north central Europe, taking their language and their stories with them as they traveled. Pilpay collected them as Aesop had--orally; they were first written down in Sanskrit. Later they came into western Europe and into our language through Persia and Arabia.

In western Europe, there were many writers who were fascinated with these ancient tales and who wrote many versions of them. During the Middle Ages, when the church played such a dominant role in people's lives, the fables were often adapted to teach some Christian moral. Finally, in the seventeenth century, Jean de La Fontaine, a talented French writer, converted many of the fables into poetry. His fable "The Milkmaid" which follows was inspired by a prose version

of the thirteenth century based on an Arabic translation of an Indian legend from Sanskrit literature! So every time we say, "Don't cry over spilled milk!" we're reaching back perhaps 4000 years for our saying. We can hardly be called original, can we? But we certainly didn't know we were that ancient either!

What you did with the Lion-and-the-Mouse fable when you rewrote it is exactly what each of the writers and translators of the Milkmaid fable did. They adapted it to their own culture, to their own time, and to their own land. Since the time of Jean de La Fontaine, however, the Milkmaid fable has not changed. Even if it does change, sometime, we will probably still go on using the two sayings which originated with it!

The Milkmaid

Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695)

Translated by Sir Brooke Boothby

A country Girl, alert and gay,
Rose to the labours of the day,
Fresh as the rose-bud on her breast.
As trim as any daisy dress'd,
To the next town she singing sped,
A milk-pail balanc'd on her head.
Careless she seem'd; yet, as she went
Her thoughts on serious things were bent. --
"A hundred eggs this milk will buy;
Which flocks of chickens may supply:
More I will sell to buy a pig,
Which, small at first, will soon grow big,
And, manag'd well, enough will bring
A cow to purchase in the spring.
The cow a calf will have, no doubt;
How gay to see him skip about!"
This thought so pleas'd the lively Lass'
She jump'd for joy; and the green grass
Was silver'd with a milky stream;
Pig, cow, and calf, an empty dream,
From which the maid, too late awake,
Sadly went home her peace to make.

He at this Milkmaid's folly smiles,
Whom a worse ridicule beguiles.
What are the projects of the great,
Still form'd without consulting fate?

The baseless fabric melts in air:
For man, the way of life is best,
That trusts futurity the least.

The Milkmaid

(Thirteenth century Latin translated into Middle English from Dialogue of Creatures Moralized)

Once upon a time, a lady delivered to her serving maid a gallon of milk to sell at the city. On the way, as the maid sat resting alongside a ditch, she began to think that with the money from the milk she would buy a hen which would have chicks; that when the chicks had grown to hens, she would sell them and buy pigs. The pigs, in turn, she would exchange for sheep, and the sheep for oxen. When she had thus come into riches, she would marry a worthy man and rejoiced thinking how she would ride to church with him on horseback. So great was her joy, she struck the ground with her foot, thinking to spur the horse, but her foot slipped, she fell in the ditch, and spilled her milk. So there she lay, far from her purpose, and, indeed, in her life-time she never had what she dreamed she would have.

The folly of vanity is that it seeks only earthly things.
(David, Psalm xciiii)

Translated from Middle English by
Eleanor Baker

Questions for Discussion

1. Compare the maids in the two versions.
   a. Of which one do you have the better picture?
   b. Can you tell their circumstances? What clues do you find in each case?
   c. Which one's circumstances seem the more secure? Why?
   d. What characteristic of the serving maid has La Fontaine dropped in his poem?
2. Compare the language in the two versions.

a. Look carefully at several sentences in the verse. What characterizes these sentences?

b. How does La Fontaine's use of words in the verse differ from the use of words in the prose version?

c. What is the effect of the rhyme in the first version? Of the rhythm? What do these qualities add to the poetic version that the prose version lacks?

3. Compare the two maids' reactions.

a. What was the milkmaid doing when she tipped over the milk? What was the serving maid doing?

b. To which one was the accident the greater catastrophe? Which one do you think would suffer the more serious consequences?

4. Account for the differences in the mood of the two versions.

a. How would you describe the mood of the first version? Of the second? What is lacking in the second and how do you account for its lack?

b. Why are the consequences more severe in the second version? Why are the maid's circumstances made less fortunate?

5. Examine the epilogues in both versions.

a. What is the moral of the first version?

b. What is the moral of the second?

c. What effect did each of these purposes of the writer have on the version it is affixed to?

6. On the basis of these discussions, decide how the writers of the versions were affected by the purpose of the version and how, in turn, this purpose controlled each writer's attitude toward his subject, toward his reader, and toward his own role as a story teller.

The Religious Man

(Arabic translation of a Persian version (not extant) of the Sanskrit original. La Fontaine's gay milkmaid, who emerged from a devout serving girl, is now identified as a religious man and the milk has changed to butter and honey.)

A religious man was in the habit of receiving every day from the house of a merchant a certain quantity of butter (oil) and honey; of which, having eaten as much as he wanted, he put the rest into a jar, which he hung on a nail in a corner of the room, hoping that the jar would in time be filled. Now as he was leaning back one day on his couch, with a stick in his hand, and the jar suspended over his head, he thought of the high price of butter and honey, and said to himself, "I will sell what is in the jar, and buy with the money which I obtain for it ten goats; which producing each of them a young one every five months, in addition to the produce of the kids as soon as they begin to bear, it will not be long before there is a great flock." He continued to make his calculations, and found that he should at this rate, in the course of two years, have more than four hundred goats. "At the expiration of the term I will buy," said he, " a hundred black cattle, in the proportion of a bull or a cow for every four goats. I will then purchase land, and hire workmen to plow it with the beast, and put it into tillage; so that before five years are over, I shall no doubt have realized a great fortune by the sale of the milk which the cows will give, and of the produce of my land. My next business will be to build a magnificent house, and engage a number of servants, both male and female; and when my establishment is completed, I will marry the handsomest woman I can find, who, in due time becoming a mother, will present me with an heir to my possessions, who, as he advances in age, shall receive the best masters that can be procured; and if the progress which he makes in learning is equal to my reasonable expectations, I shall be amply repaid for the pains and expense which I have bestowed upon him; but if, on the other hand, he disappoints my hopes, the rod which I have here shall be the instrument with which I will make him feel the displeasure of a justly offended parent." At these words, he suddenly raised the hand which held the stick towards the jar, and broke it, and the contents ran down upon his head and face.

The Brahman

(Finally, reaching way into the past beyond the Persian version, which is missing in this interesting fable-chain, the Sanskrit version begins the sequence, the religious man is a Brahman, and the butter and honey of Arabia are the staple food of India--rice.)

In the town of Devikotta, there lived a Brahman of the name of Devasarman. At the feast of the great equinox he received a plate full of rice. He took it, went into a potter's shop, which was full of crockery, and overcome by the heat, he lay down in a corner and began to doze. In order to protect his plate of rice he kept his stick in his hand, and began to think: "Now, if I sell this plate of rice, I shall receive ten cowries (kapardaka). I shall then, on the spot, buy pots and plates, and after having increased my capital again and again, I shall buy and sell betel-nuts and dresses till I become enormously rich. Then I shall marry four wives, and the youngest and prettiest of the four I shall make a great pet of. Then the other wives will be so angry, and begin to quarrel. But I shall be in great rage, and take a stick, and give them a good flogging." While he said this, he flung his stick away; the plate of rice was smashed to pieces, and many of the pots in the shop were broken. The potter, hearing the noise, ran into the shop, and when he saw his pots broken, he gave the Brahman a good scolding, and drove him out of his shop. Therefore I say, "He who rejoices over plans for the future will come to grief, like the Brahman who broke the pots."

Other Fables in Prose and Verse

The Tortoise and the Hare

Sir Brooke Boothby, Bart.

Talents alone will never do:
There must be sense and conduct too.

A Hare, the nimblest of her race,
Sneer'd at a Tortoise's slow pace.
"Coxcomb," the wily Tortoise said,
"Such is thy giddy brainless head,
Were I a race with thee to run,
I should consider it as won."

"Ho, ho," says Puss, "since such your skill,
We'll make the trial when you will."
The bargain made and sign'd, the crowd
At the grave Tortoise shouted loud.

He started, and the Hare repos'd;
Feigning to sleep, her eyes she clos'd,
In mockery of the Tortoise' speed;
At last she fell asleep indeed;
Dreaming of triumphs while she lay,
Old Steady had pursu'd his way.
When he the winning-post drew nigh,
The mob set up a louder cry,
Which wak'd the Hare, in time to see
The Tortoise crown'd with victory;
Oblig'd to pocket the disgrace,
That Slow-and-sure had won the race.

The Tortoise and the Hare

Babrius, translated by James Davies, M.A.

To the shy hare the toroise smiling spoke,
When he about her feet began to joke:
"I'll pass thee by, through fleeter than the gale."
"Pooh!" said the hare, "I don't believe thy tale.
Try but one course, and thou my speed shalt know."
"Who'll fix the prize, and whither we shall go?"
Of the fleet-footed hare the tortoise asked.
To whom he answered, "Reynard shall be tasked
With this; that subtle fox, whom thou dost see."
The tortoise then (no hesitater she!)
Kept jogging on, but earliest reached the post;
The hare, relying on his fleetness, lost
Space, during sleep, he thought he could recover
When he awoke. But then the race was over;
The tortoise gained her aim, and slept her sleep.

From negligence doth care the vantage reap.

"The Tortoise and the Hare"

Aesop

(For selection see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909, p. 38.)

"The Reed and the Oak"

Jean de La Fontaine

The Lowly rise, the warfare o'er;
The Mighty fall to rise no more.

A lofty Oak that towering stood,
The ancient honour of the wood,
Look'd downwards with a gracious eye
Upon a Reed that grew hard by.
"In truth," he said, "thy hapless fate
I cannot but commiserate.
The softest breeze that curls the lakes
Bend to the earth thy body makes;
While rudest hurricanes that blow
Unheeded pass upon my brow.

Poor Plant, the sport of every wind!
Nature to thee has been unkind;
My boughs some shelter might bestow,
Didst thou not dwell so far below."
"Thanks," says the Bulrush, "Royal Tree,
That you should deign to notice me;
But your compassion you may spare;
Greater than mine your dangers are;
Though you so long have brav'd the blast,
Your fatal hour may come at last.
I bend, 'tis true, but never break."
A hurricane, while yet he spake,
From every side the welkin rends;
The Oak stands firm, the Ozier bends.
The storm, with still increasing force,
Full on the Oak directs its course.
Up-rifted, with tremendous sound,
His leafy honours dress the ground;
Prostrate he lies, a ruin wide,
The Bulrush waving o'er his side.

"The Tree and the Reed"

Aesop

(For selection see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909. p. 26.)

"The Golden Goose"

(Translated from Pilpay's fables by Joseph Gaer)

(For selection, see Joseph Gaer's "The Golden Goose" from The Fables of India, copyright 1955, Little, Brown & Co., pp. 164-166, beginning "Once there lived a good man...." and ending "...never visited his family again.")

"The Goose with the Golden Eggs"

Aesop

(For selection see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909, p. 33.)

"The Ant and the Grasshopper"

Aesop

(For selection see Harvard Classics, Vol. 17, edited by Charles W. Eliot, P. F. Collier & Son, 1909, p. 25.)

"The Fox and the Crow"

Jean de La Fontaine

Master Crow on a tree, perched high in the air,
Was holding a cheese in his beak;
Master Fox, on the scent, with his delicate flair,
Found words of fair greeting to speak:

"Why, there's my dear Sir Crow!--Good day, Sir.
Upon my soul, you have a way, Sir,
A style so smart and debonair
That, if your song
Can be said to belong
To your plumage, I'm certainly free to declare
You're the Prince Nonpareil of the folk of the wood."

Hearing which, Master Crow scarcely knew if he stood
On his head or his heels, for it sounded so good.
So, to show his sweet voice and his musical bent,
He spread his beak wider, and down the cheese went.

The fox snapped it up, saying, "This, my dear man,
Will teach you that every flatterer can
Depend on his hearers and live at his ease.
The lesson, I take it, is cheap at a cheese."

The crow, shamefaced and in a troubled state,
Swore
He'd be caught no more,
But swore a bit late.
ONLY FOOLS LISTEN TO FLATTERY.

Part V

As you read the various fables in this unit, you noticed that the meaning was often summarized in a brief statement, either at the beginning or the end of the story. Perhaps you found yourself agreeing with this comment and saying to yourself, "Yes, that is very true." Many of these wise sayings are very old indeed. Some of them are attributed to Solomon, a Hebrew king who lived almost a thousand years before the birth of Christ. Many scholars believe that they are really much older than this. You will find these beautifully expressed thoughts collected into a book called Proverbs, a part of the Old Testament of the Bible.

Here are a few Proverbs that you might recognize:

1. **Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.**

2. **Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbor.**

3. **He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.**

4. **A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.**

5. **Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise:**
   Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,
   Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

6. **As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.**

7. **The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.**

8. **The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.**

9. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

10. Boast not thyself of tomorrow;
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

11. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he
that gathereth by labour shall increase.

12. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,
And the Lord shall reward thee.

13. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
And loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do any of these sayings remind you of fables you have read? Which ones?

2. What do you notice about the way in which these sayings are written down? Why do most of them have a colon in the middle?

3. Say a few of them out loud. What do you notice about what comes before the colon, and what comes after it? Do you think that putting two opposing ideas side by side adds to the effectiveness of the saying?

4. Sometimes the ideas are the same. Why do you think the writer still kept the same form of balanced sentence?

5. Do you think you could possibly say the same thing in fewer words? Does this compactness add to or detract from the force of the thought expressed? Next year you will study in greater detail comparison and contrast in literature, but there is no reason why you should not be aware of it now.

Exercises

1. Think of some contrasting behavior, wise and foolish, in school life. Now see if you can write a proverb about it.

2. Either take the proverb you have written, or choose one from the selection given in this lesson and write a fable to illustrate it.

Part VI

There is another type of story very similar to the fable. It is called a parable. Very well known are the stories told by Jesus to help people understand his teaching. In fact they are so well known that many of our everyday expressions refer to them, which is one reason why we should be familiar with them. What do we mean when we say someone is a "Good Samaritan," or "They killed the fatted calf," or "He is hiding his light under a bushel," or "Don't bury your talent"? Sometimes when an idea turns out not to have been a very good one, we might say, "That house was built upon the sand." Do you know why?

All these sayings refer to stories found in the New Testament part of the Bible. There are several different versions of the Bible, all telling the same things, but in slightly different styles of language. Some you will find easier to understand than others, and some you might think more beautifully written than others.

The first parable we are going to read is taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

(For "The Parable of the Sower" see the Bible, Revised Standard Version, Thomas Nelson & Sons: New York, Toronto, Edinburgh, 1952, Luke 8:5-8.)

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Jesus told this story? Do you think he had a purpose other than to entertain his listeners?

2. If there is a deeper meaning, what do you think it is? When Jesus first told this story, his close friends asked him to explain it. You can find his answer in Chapter 13 of St. Matthew's gospel, beginning at verse 18.

3. What name would we perhaps give to "thorns"? Explain "brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

4. In what way does this story resemble a fable? How is it different? If you are not sure about the answer to this question yet, think about it as you read some more parables.

A lawyer, putting a test question to Jesus, asked him, "Who is my neighbor?" Instead of giving a direct answer, Jesus told this story, quoted here from the New English Bible.

"The Good Samaritan"

(For parable, see The New English Bible, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1961, Luke 10:30-37.)

Questions for Discussion

1. When Jesus asked the lawyer to answer his own question, whom do you think he identified as the neighbor in the story? To understand the full force of the parable, you should know that the Jews of Jesus' day despised the Samaritans, and felt greatly superior to them. By doing this act of mercy, the Samaritan "heaped coals of fire" upon the head of the Jew.

2. What does that quotation "coals of fire" refer to? Do you think the lawyer would have seen in this story a reference to the Proverbs?

3. Why do you think Jesus made the other characters in the story a priest and a Levite? (You may need to look up the exact meanings of these words as they apply to the Hebrews.)

As you read this next parable, quoted here from the King James version of the Bible, see if it reminds you of one or more proverbs printed in your booklet.

(For selection, see the Bible, King James Version, Matthew 7:24-27)

Questions for Discussion

1. Which proverbs do you think were saying the same thing as this story?

2. Which did you enjoy reading most, proverbs or parables? Why?

3. Now that you have read three parables, do you see any way in which parables differ from fables?

4. Compare the form of this parable with the proverbs. Do you see any similarity? What effect does the repetition have upon the impression the story makes on the listener? Do you think it serves to heighten the contrast?

5. Compare the style of this parable with the other two you have read. In what way is it different? Would you say this is prose or poetry? Read this selection aloud and decide if it has rhythm.

Here is another parable in modern translation taken from the New American Catholic Edition of the Bible.

"Parable of the Gold Pieces"

(For passage, see New American Catholic Edition of the Bible, Benziger Brothers Inc., New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago, San Francisco, 1950, 1958, 1961, Luke 19: 11-28.)

Questions for Discussion

1. This is a parable that a great many people find difficult to understand. Perhaps recognizing the reason for its telling will make it clearer. Read again the introduction to the parable. Now can you see what the story is saying?

2. Read again the sentence toward the end of the selection, "I say to you that to everyone who has shall be given...etc." What is your reaction to that statement? Did you say, "That isn't fair!"? What kind of students do you elect to be your school officers? If they work hard, are they likely to be re-elected, perhaps to a more important position? What do you do about an officer who accepts the position, then doesn't do anything at all?

3. Compare the style of this selection with the last parable you read. Which seems closer to the way you speak? What do you think is the main difference between the two styles of writing?

Exercises and More Questions

(At your teacher's direction, do all or one of these.)

1. Find and read some more parables. Here are some suggestions of stories you might enjoy:

The Prodigal Son	Luke 15: 11-32
The Parable of the Talents	Matthew 25: 15-28
The Wise and Foolish Virgins	Matthew 25: 1-10
The Lost Coin	Luke 15: 8-10
The Lost Sheep	Luke 15: 4-7

2. Find and read a fable in the Old Testament. Compare it with the other fables you have read.

Jotham's Fable of the Trees	Judges 9: 6-21
Jehoash's Fable of the Cedar and the Thistle	II Kings 14: 9

3. Skim through the Book of Proverbs, or read some of those collected in Prose and Poetry of the Old Testament, edited by J. F. Fullington (Paperback--Crofts Classics).

4. Now that you have read several Fables, Proverbs, and Parables, write a brief definition of each. List several ways in which they are the same. How do they differ? To what extent does the purpose of the writer have any bearing upon the form of the story?

5. Try to write some proverbs of your own to illustrate the thought of Housman's "Loveliest of Trees" and Russell's "The Price of the Head."

6. Could you call "Bishop Hatto" a fable? A parable? Why or why not?

Further Reading

Gaer, Joseph. The Fables of India. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955.

A collection of fables from India.

Handford, S. A. (trans.) Fables of Aesop. A Penguin Classic (143:95¢).

A comprehensive collection of fables illustrated with pen and ink drawings by Brian Robb.

Kipling, Rudyard. The Jungle Books, Volume 1 and 2.

Kipling's famous beast stories. Volume 2 is a collection of his animal short stories.

Orwell, George. Animal Farm. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1956. A Signet Classic (CP121: 60¢).

A book-length fable.

Thurber, James. Fables for Our Times. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955.

A retelling of many of the fables with characteristic Thurber ending.

Bible--any version.

Prose and Poetry from the Old Testament. Crofts Classics.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

THE SHORT STORY

Literature Curriculum I

Student Version

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THE SHORT STORY

PART ONE: RIP VAN WINKLE

by Washington Irving

Do you like to read about ghosts, spirits, and strange, fearful events? This is not exactly a ghost story, nor is it a science fiction tale, but it will remind you in many ways of both. The main character meets some unusual people; some very remarkable things happen to him.

AUTHOR

Washington Irving was one of America's first authors. He was born at the end of the colonial period, and his mother named him after a popular general. Guess who? He was not a very studious boy, but he liked to write themes and stories. When he grew up, he published a magazine and wrote stories, legends, history, and biography. Of all his work the stories people enjoy most today are "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle." Both these stories tell us about the superstitions and legends of the Dutch people of New York. These stories do not have a great deal of action, but they are both very interesting because they are such unusual stories. Notice when you read "Rip Van Winkle" how Irving describes the countryside and the people. He is not in a hurry to tell the story, so relax and enjoy all the interesting things he talks about as he tells the narrative.

RIP VAN WINKLE

(A Posthumous Writing of Diedrich Knickerbocker.)

"By Woden, God of Saxons,
From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday.
Truth is a thing that ever I will keep
Unto thylke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre."

Cartwright.

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Catskill Mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains; and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant;[1] (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small, yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina.[2] He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient, henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long suffering. A termagant wife may therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing: and, if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

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[1] Governor of Manhattan Island in 1647.

[2] Fort Christina, or Christiana, was a Swedish fort, situated five miles north of Fort Cassimir (now Newcastle, Del.), attacked and captured by the Dutch of New Netherlands in 1655.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles, and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's[3] lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn or building stone fences. The women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm. It was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country. Everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do: so that, though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst-conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast off galligaskins[4] which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would

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[3]The Tartars were a nomadic tribe of Central Asia, noted for their fine horsemanship.

[4]A kind of wide breeches.

rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family.

Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequer use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house,--the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods; but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house, his crest fell; his tail drooped to the ground or curled between his legs; he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle; and, at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on. A tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of his Majesty George III.[5] Here they used to sit in the shade of a long, lazy, summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions which sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveler. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster,--a dapper, learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary! and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place!

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun, and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him,

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[5]George III (1738-1820) ascended the English throne in 1760, and reigned sixty years.

and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but, when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds, and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage, and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative to escape from the labor of the farm and the clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and, if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Catskill Mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and reechoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene. Evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long, blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked around, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" At the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him. He looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight

cf something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick, bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion,--a cloth jerkin[6] strapped round the waist; several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulders a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and, mutually relieving each other, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long, rolling peals, like distant thunder that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but, supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheater, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time, Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for, though the former marveled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheater, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the center was a company of odd-looking personages playing at ninepins. They were dressed in a quaint, outlandish fashion. Some wore short doublets;[7] others, jerkins, with long knives in their belts; and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar. One had a large head, broad face, and small, piggish eyes. The face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugarloaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weatherbeaten countenance. He wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger,[8] high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting in the parlor of Dominie Van Schaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that, though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party

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[6] A close jacket much worn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[7] A close-fitting outer garment, covering the body from the neck to below the waist.

[8] A short broadsword worn from the girdle, and slightly curved at the point.

of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddently desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack- luster countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling. They quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands.[9] He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often, that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes. It was a bright, sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes; and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep,--the strange man with a keg of liquor, the mountain ravine, the wild retreat among the rocks, the woe-begone party at ninepins, the flagon. "Oh, that wicked flagon!" thought Rip: "what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle!"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysters of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain: the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and, if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip; "and, if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen. He found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but, to his astonishment, a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and wit ch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted

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[9]Holland gin.

their coils and tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheater; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high, impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad, deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog. He was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice, and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? The morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun, he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village, he met a number of people, but none whom he knew; which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and, whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip involuntarily to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long.

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered: it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors, strange faces at the windows: everything was strange. His mind now misgave him. He began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Catskill Mountains; there ran the silver Hudson at a distance; there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been. Rip was sorely perplexed. "That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly."

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay,--the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called himby name; but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut, indeed. "My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears. He called

loudly for his wife and children: the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn: but it, too, was gone. A large, rickety, wooden building stood in its place, with great, gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats; and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall, naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap;[10] and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes. All this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a scepter, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, "General Washington."

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about the rights of citizens, election, members of Congress, liberty, Bunker's Hill,[11] heroes of seventy-six, and other words, that were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long, grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and the army of women and children that had gathered at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eying him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and drawing him partly aside, inquired on which side he voted. Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear whether he was a Federal or a Democrat. Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question, when a knowing, self-important old gentleman in a sharp cocked hat made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, an and, planting himself before Van Winkle,--with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane; his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul,--demanded in an austere tone what brought him to the

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[10] Cap of liberty worn in the Roman states by manumitted slaves. It was made thus according to a coin of Brutus after the death of Caesar, and worn by Brutus and his rebels, as a token of their republican sentiment. Its shape was copied from the Phrygian cap, which had become a symbol or emblem of personal and political freedom.

[11] A celebrated height in Charlestown, Mass. (now a part of Boston), famous as the place where a battle was fought between the British and American forces June 17, 1775.

election with a gun on his shoulder and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village. "Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor, quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject to the King, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders: "A Tory, a Tory! A spy! A refugee! Hustle him! Away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order, and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit what he came there for, and whom he was seeking. The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well, who are they? Name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied in a thin, piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! Why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone, too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war. Some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point;[11] [12] others say he was drowned in the squall at the foot of Anthony's Nose.[13] I don't know: he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars, too, was a great militia general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him, too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand,--war, Congress, Stony Point. He had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three. "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain, apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity,

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[11] The well-known promontory on the Hudson River, forty-two miles north of New York, where, July 16, 1779, Gen. "Mad Anthony" Wayne took by storm the fort upon its rocky heights.

[12] Anthony's or St. Anthony's Nose is a headland fifty-seven miles from New York, on the east side of the Hudson, in Putnam County. It juts from the south side of Breakneck Hill at the north entrance of the Highlands.

and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name.

"God knows!" exclaimed he, at his wits' end. "I'm not myself: I'm somebody else. That's me yonder. No, that's somebody else got into my shoes. I was myself last night: but I fell asleep on the mountain; and they've changed my gun; and everything's changed; and I'm changed; and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The bystanders began to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-beareded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip!" cried she. "Hush, you little fool! The old man won't hurt you."

The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, his name was Rip Van Winkle. It's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since. His dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask, but he put it with a faltering voice:--

"Where's your mother?"

Oh, she too had died but a short time since. She broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England peddler.

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he,--"young Rip Van Winkle once, old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and, peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! It is Rip Van Winkle! It is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor! Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it. Some were

seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks; and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head, upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Catskill Mountains had always been haunted by strange beings; that it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson,[13] the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon,[14] being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name; that his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses, playing at ninepins in the hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the compay broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her. She had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm, but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits. He soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time, and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can do nothing with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor,--how that there had been a revolutionary war; that the country had thrown off

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[13] A distinguished English navigator, who made four voyages, attempting to find a shorter passage to China than by the way of the Cape of Good Hope. On the third of these voyages he entered the bay now called New York Bay, and (Sept. 11, 1609) sailed up what is now the Hudson River. During his fourth voyage, two years later, he penetrated the straits and discovered the great bay of Canada which now bears his name. Here his mutinous sailors cast him adrift in a small boat, and left him to die.

[14] Hendrick Hudson's ship.

the yoke of old England, and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George III he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician,--the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him,--but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was, petticoat government. Happily, that was at an end. He had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed at first to vary on some points every time he told it, which was doubtless owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related; and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Catskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of ninepins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

Other fine stories by Irving which you might want to read are "The Spectre Bridegroom" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What details did Irving give about Rip Van Winkle? about Dame Van Winkle?

2. What was Rip's greatest failing?

3. Why did people like Rip in spite of this?

4. Do you think the author is sympathetic to Rip? Do you think he wants us to like or dislike him? Try to find a few phrases that will prove your point.

5. Describe the dog Wolf. What did he and Rip have in common?

6. When his wife's tongue grew too sharp, what activity gave Rip some pleasure?

7. Find the passage that describes the mountain glen where Rip met Hendrik Hudson. What words and phrases are used by the author to create a feeling of loneliness and uneasiness?

8. When Rip arrives in the glen, how does Wolf react to the sound of voices?

9. What was strange about the clothes the group of strangers were wearing? What seemed particularly odd about their behavior? What caused Rip to fall asleep?

10. When did you first suspect that Rip had been asleep much longer than one night?

11. What were some of the things that bothered Rip when he first awoke?

12. When he arrived in the village, how did he find it changed?

13. What change had come to the King George Inn?

14. What conversational topics especially perplexed Rip? Why?

15. Why was Rip called a "Tory?" Why had this term become a distastefu thing to the community?

16. What had happened to his friends Nicholas Vedder and Brom Dutcher? To Van Brummel?

17. Rip's confusion was compounded when his son was pointed out to him. Why?

18. Rip revealed his identity to his daughter after hearing her version of his disappearance. What bit of information did she reveal that helped Rip in his revelations?

19. Do you think he would have told who he was if this information (see above) had not been forthcoming?

20. What incident helped the community to accept Rip's story? According to Peter Vanderdonk, who were the strangers Rip had encountered?

21. How did the story end? Read the last paragraph again. Do you think it is a good ending?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

Imagine that a person went to sleep twenty years ago and awakened only today. Make a list of all the things he might find strange. Is the list as long as the one poor Rip had to contend with?

Do you think Washington Irving wrote this story to show us what trouble men get into who are lazy and who do not obey their wives? If not, what do you think is the purpose of the story? State it in one sentence.

Next you will read London's "To Build a Fire." As you do, think how the two stories differ. Which has more action? Which gets into the main story more rapidly? Try to find other important ways these stories differ.

What is the mood of the scene in the mountain glen when Rip and the strangers meet? (Is it cheerful, mysterious, sad, or frightening?) How do you know?

VOCABULARY

Irving uses some words that may not be familiar to you in this story. However, we can often understand the meaning of a word by the way it is used in a sentence. Try a few and see how well you can do. Read again the passages in which Irving uses the following words. Decide what you think they might mean. Check in your dictionary if necessary.

tranquility
akimbo
chivalrous
tribulation

COMPOSITION

Turn back to the text and read some of the descriptive passages. You might choose the paragraphs describing the mountain glen, for example. Your teacher will discuss some of the passages with you. Now write a short paragraph (perhaps only ten sentences) in which you describe a commonplace object familiar to everyone. (You might choose to describe the cafeteria at lunch, the halls at noon, a classroom, or even a scene from the classroom window.) When you have finished, read your paper over. Will it help others to see the object or place you have described? If you have trouble make a list of concrete objects. If you are describing a scene visible from a classroom window, your list might look like this:

green lawns
blue mountains in the distance
clouds
mist rising from the valley
a boy in gym clothes
a red brick wing of the shop building
green-roofed houses in the distance
smoke

Now keep your list handy while you write your sentences.

Perhaps some of you might enjoy writing a story about some local legend you have heard. Perhaps your grandparents may know a few themselves. If you do decide to tell such a story, remember that you may change it around as you like and even add things to it.

THE SHORT STORY

PART TWO: TO BUILD A FIRE

by Jack London

What does this title suggest to you? After you get through reading the story, see if you think the title was well chosen, and be prepared to give your reasons.

You will find this story of Jack London's very different from "Rip Van Winkle." As you read, try to decide what kind of story it is.

AUTHOR

The life of Jack London seems to have been as full of adventure as some of his stories. He was born in San Francisco, California, in 1876. As a boy he worked hard, and at one time became an oyster pirate, and then a member of the fish patrol. At the age of 17 he signed as seaman on a sailing vessel. He joined the first gold rush to the Klondike in 1897, but was unsuccessful, and tramped across the United States and Canada. In 1904 he went to Japan as a war correspondent, and in 1914 to Mexico. In 1906 he and his wife started in a small yacht on a voyage round the world. All these experiences he made use of in his stories, and you will recognize where the setting for this story was drawn from.

TEXT: The Call of the Wild and Selected Stories, Jack London. A Signet Classic (Paperback), 1960. CD20. Page numbers refer to this edition.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What type of short story is this?

2. What did you decide about the appropriateness of the title?

3. What kind of person do you feel the man to be? Do you think the author is sympathetic to him? Find evidence in the text upon which you based your opinion.

4. Why do you think the author did not give a name to the man?

5. Is this story just about a man who fails to survive the cruel cold of the Arctic, or do you think there is another subject at a deeper level? If so, what would you say it is?

6. How does the author get across to the reader just how very

cold it is ? Find examples in the text.

7. You will notice that Jack London uses descriptive detail almost as much as Washington Irving did in "Rip Van Winkle." Do you notice any difference in the way it is used?

8. At what point in the story were you sure the man wasn't going to make it? Did you have any doubts earlier than this about his ability to outwit the extreme cold? What hints were you given by the author that he might fail?

9. Often a writer will insert "signs" in his story that point toward the direction the action will take. You may not notice these as you read a story for the first time, but looking back, you will recognize them as foreshadowings of things to come. Can you find any such details in this story?

10. We usually think of a dog as being "man's best friend." Is that the role of the dog in this story? If not, why do you think the author included the dog in the story?

11. How do you think the author feels about the dog? And about the man? In what way does he compare them? In the conflict between man and nature in this story, which side is the dog on?

12. Although this story doesn't have as many things happening in it as "Rip Van Winkle," you will notice that it still follows the usual narrative pattern of having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Can you identify the three parts in the story? Where does most of the action happen? What does the writer do in the beginning? What is the importance of the end?

13. Did you notice that there is absolutely no dialogue in this story, except for the last words spoken aloud by the dying man? Do you suppose the author had a purpose for this?

14. How did you feel as you read the story? Do you suppose the author deliberately put his story together in a way that would make you feel the suspense? Looking back over the story, can you see how he achieved this purpose?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

1. Do you think Jack London wrote this story to tell us how cold it is in the Arctic regions? In not more than two sentences, write what you think the author's purpose was.

2. What is the mood of the opening paragraph? Write

down some of the words the author uses that suggest this story will not have a happy ending.

3. Make a list of some of the mistakes the man made in the story that show the reader he has not had much experience of living in the cold region.

4. The author makes use of figurative language when he describes the effect of the cold on the faces of the man and the dog (paragraph 7). What does he say the frozen moisture is like on the dog's fur? How does he describe the man's frozen beard? Do you know the name we give to these figures of speech?

VOCABULARY

Some of the words used by London may not be familiar to you. Often you can guess the meaning from context, that is, by the way the word is used in the sentence. If you are not sure what these words mean, look them up in your dictionary.

intangible, p. 142, line 10
subtle, p. 142, line 11
conjectural, p. 143, line 14
speculatively, p. 143, line 22
shied, p. 146, line 1
intimacy, p. 148, line 26
caresses, p. 148, line 28
manipulation, p. 152, line 41

COMPOSITION

Choose one of the following.

1. Read again paragraphs 4-7. Notice how the author uses repetition, contrast, and detail to impress upon the reader the extreme cold. Here are some of the details;

spittle crackled in the air
his lunch was under his shirt to keep it from freezing
his nose and cheek bones were numb
the dog was instinctively depressed by the cold
frozen breath of man and dog
man's beard turned to ice

Repetition is used very effectively in dealing with the cold. Sometimes the same words are repeated ("It certainly was cold"). Sometimes the same words repeating the temperature are interspersed between the details. This effect is heightened by the contrast of the warm cabin with a fire and a hot supper waiting, or the mention of the fire that the dog yearned for. Imagine you are describing how wet it gets in the Northwest. Make a list of details you could use to illustrate the degree of wetness.

Decide what repetitions you could use for emphasis. What contrast might you inject to heighten the effect?

Now use your ideas to write several sentences describing the rain. You may use a man and an animal too if you wish.

or 2. Read again London's description of the man building the fire. Notice the detailed way he describes each step. Imagine you are describing a camper building a fire to cook a meal. List all the things necessary for building a successful fire. Decide in what order these things should be dealt with. Now write a few sentences describing a camper building his fire.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Instead of a campfire, write about one of the following.

Preparing a meal for an unexpected guest when your mother is away
or
Preparing to build a model on a rainy afternoon
or
Preparing a picnic lunch at short notice.

THE SHORT STORY

PART THREE: THE TELL-TALE HEART

by Edgar Allen Poe

Here is a story quite different from the other two you have read in this unit. "Rip Van Winkle" is a leisurely tale, and "To Build A Fire" a suspense story. Be ready to discuss with your teacher how you might describe this one. When you have read it, you will probably agree that it needs a special label.

AUTHOR

Edgar Allen Poe, an American writer and critic who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century, brought something new to short-story writing. As you read "The Tell-Tale Heart" you are sure to be struck by the different effect of this work, as compared with the other stories you have read. Later, as you discuss the story with your teacher, see if you can discover how Poe created this effect, and in what ways this story differs from the other two you have read.

THE TELL-TALE HEART
by
Edgar Allen Poe
(1843)

TRUE! -- nervous-- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am! but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses-- not destroyed -- not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily--how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture-- a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees--very gradually--I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded--with what caution--with what foresight--with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it--oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly--very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!--would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously--oh, so cautiously--cautiously (for the hinges creaked)--I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights--every night just at midnight--but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in openingthe door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night, had I felt the extent of my own powers--of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back--but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he

could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out--"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;--just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief--oh, no!--it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when over-charged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself--"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney--it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. <u>All in vain</u>; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel--although he neither saw nor heard--to <u>feel</u> the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little--a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it-you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily--until, at length a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open--wide, wide open--and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness--all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses?--now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew <u>that</u> sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every

instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!--do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me--the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once--once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye--not even his --could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out--no stain of any kind--no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all--ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labours, it was four o'clock--still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,--for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,--for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search--search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, erelong, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my

ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:--it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness--until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale;--but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased--and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound--much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath--and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly--more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men--but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed--I raved--I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder--louder--louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!--no, no! They heard!--they suspected!--they knew! they were making a mockery of my horror!--this I thought, and this I think. But any thing was better than this agony! Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!--and now--again!--hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!--

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed!--tear up the planks!--here, here!--it is the beating of his hideous heart!"

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What type of story would you call "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

2. Why do you think Poe chose this title? Is it a good one? Why or why not?

3. You will notice that the story is written in the first person. Is the speaker the author? Why do you suppose Poe chose to write the story this way instead of using the third-person omniscient observer point of view?

4. What is this story about? When you read "To Build a Fire," you discussed the subject on two levels -- the actual facts of the story, and something on a deeper level that the author was trying to say. Does this story also have subjects on two levels? What are they?

5. In the last story you read, you thought about the author's purpose, and how the form of the story took shape as it tried to achieve that purpose. What do you think is the author's purpose in "The Tell-Tale Heart"? How has this purpose helped shape the story?

6. What is the name of the old man? Of the speaker in the story? How old was the speaker? What does he look like? What can your answers to all these things tell you about Poe's purposes?

7. What does the first paragraph tell you? Why is this important? What kind of mood does it create?

8. Is there any conversation in this story? To whom is the speaker talking?

9. What happened to the murderer? Why did the story end so abruptly? Do you think it would have been better if you had been told more about what happened later? Why or why not?

10. Explain the "Evil Eye." Why did the speaker call it "the eye of a vulture?" Do you think the old man was evil?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

1. Look back through the story and see how many clues you can find that make you suspect the teller is insane.

2. When you read "To Build A Fire," you discussed figurative

language with your teacher. See if you can find any metaphors or similes in this story. Why do you think the author chose these particular figures of speech?

3. What words and phrases (other than the figurative language) does Poe use to create an atmosphere of fear and death? Make a list of some of them.

4. Look back through the first part of the story. Note some of the details that help create suspense. Does Poe also make use of repetition and contrast to heighten suspense? See if you can find some examples.

5. Go to your school library and find the titles of some other short stories by Poe. Make a list of those you think you and other members of your class would enjoy reading.

VOCABULARY

Read the following passages from the story. If you do not already know the meaning of the underlined words, you may be able to guess the meaning easily as you reread these sentences. Select the word that you think most clearly matches the underlined one.

1. "Never before that night, had I felt the extent of my own powers--of my sagacity."

   a. shrewdness b. fear c. joy

2. "You should have seen how wisely I proceeded--with what caution--with what foresight--with what dissimulation I went to work."

   a. underhanded plotting b. cruelty c. eagerness

3. "There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity."

   a. anger b. smooth politeness c. deception

4. "But anything was more tolerable than this derision."

   a. happiness b. truth c. scorn

5. "Villains!" I shrieked, dissemble no more!"

   a. pretend b. lie c. hate

COMPOSITION

Choose one of the following topics to write about:

1. You have read the story as it was told by the insane murderer. Imagine you were one of the officers who visited the house on the night of the murder, and watched the murderer make his confession. Re-tell the story from this different point of view. Perhaps you would like to write it as the preliminary report to your superior officer.

2. This might make a suitable subject for a ballad. Decide what incidents you would keep, and what details you would discard. Arrange them into a suitable order for telling, and try to rewrite the story as a ballad.

3. Have you ever been afraid? Most of us have at one time or another! Recount the incident that made you afraid, and try to make us feel your fear by the details you tell, and the tone of the words you choose to describe the situation. For example, you may have been alone in the house at night when a severe electrical storm put out all the lights. Perhaps you had forgotten the cat was in the house with you. You may have been watching a horror show on television at the time the electricity failed. When the cat brushed against you in the dark, how did you feel?

4. Write about an embarrassing experience you have had. Begin by making a list of the details you can tell. Think how you can heighten the effect by contrasting your predicament with the calm of those around you. What repetition might you use to deepen the impression? Decide on the beginning, middle, and end. Finally, write your story, choosing words carefully to create an atmosphere of embarrassment.

PART FOUR: THE RED PONY
by John Steinbeck

The Red Pony is a short novel and you may want to read all three chapters. The first part, which you are going to read in class, is called "The Gift." We meet Jody, a ten year old, and share his joy at receiving a pony of his own. Some important things happen to Jody before the story ends.

The story, however, is really more about people than it is about events. As you read, ask yourself: What kind of person is Jody? his father? his mother? Billy Buck?

AUTHOR

Since his novel Tortilla Flat was published in 1935, John Steinbeck has been one of our leading novelists. He was born in Salinas, California, a region he often uses as a setting for his stories and novels. People are always important in Steinbeck's books. He is noted for his sympathetic understanding of them. He reveals them to us through bits of conversation and incidents, and when we finish we feel we know them. Imaginary characters which authors create are not necessarily any less true-to-life than real people. Sometimes a painter can make a portrait of someone more revealing than a camera can; just so, the author can probe deep into the way people feel and act, and thus can create reality, too. As you read this story, watch for bits of conversation that reveal the characters to you.

(For selection beginning "At daybreak Billy Buck emerged...." and ending "...how he'd feel about it?" see "The Gift" from The Red Pony by John Steinbeck, copyright 1933, 1960. Reprinted by permission of Viking Press, Inc., pp. 9 - 50.)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What clues do we have as to Billy's age?

2. Why do you think Jody smashed the green muskmelon when he knew it "was a bad thing to do"?

3. Why did most of Carl Tifflin's gifts to his son carry restrictions? Do you think this was "good discipline"?

4. Why is the repeated event of owls hunting mice mentioned in the story?

5. Why did Jody's father leave the barn hurriedly after showing the colt to his son?

6. When Jody said he was going to name his colt Gabilan Mountains, Billy knew how he felt. How did he feel?

7. How did the horse make Jody different in the eyes of his friends?

8. When Jody went out in the early morning to care for his horse "in the gray quiet mornings when the land and the brush and the houses and the trees were silver-gray and black like a photograph negative," he walked "past the sleeping stones and the sleeping cypress tree." Here the author uses comparisons in order to make the scene clear to us. Discuss these figures of speech with your teacher and then find several more in the story.

9. Why did Billy believe Jody should talk to his colt? Why did Jody listen with respect to Billy Buck's advice?

10. How did Jody believe one could judge whether a horse was a "fine spirited beast" or not?

11. How could Jody tell what Gabilan felt about things?

12. What kept Gabilan from being too perfect?

13. Why did Carl object to his son teaching Gabilan tricks? Do you think a horse loses dignity if it is taught to perform just for the amusement of people?

14. How did you feel about "force-breaking" Gabilan?

15. Why did Jody rejoice when Gabilan fought the bridle?

16. What secret fear began to torture Jody when the day for riding the colt approached?

17. Find several ways the author describes the approach of winter. ("The cut ends of the stubble turned black with mildew," "dry oak leaves drifted down," etc.)

18. Why did Jody hope a heavy rain would not come until after Thanksgiving?

19. "Carl Tifflin hated weakness and sickness, and he held a violent contempt for helplessness." Do you think the author agrees with this? If not, why doesn't he say so?

20. Find a sentence that helps us understand how Jody's mother felt about the pony's illness.

21. What action of Carl's shows he had a softer heart than he would admit?

22. The name "Gabilan" means "hawk." When Jody goes to see about his sick pet, he sees overhead "a hawk flying so high that it caught the sun on its breast and shone like a spark. Two blackbirds were driving him down the sky, glittering as they attacked their enemy." Why does Steinbeck put this detail in?

23. Why do you think Jody felt he had to kill the buzzard even though he knew the buzzard had not killed the pony?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

1. See if you can find some descriptions of the countryside. See how many <u>concrete</u> things are described. Make a list of all the objects Steinbeck mentions in the descriptions.

2. The conversations reveal some important things about the people in this story. Re-read some of the dialogue and see if you can find a passage that shows us that a. Jody is brave. b. Billy understands his little friend Jody. c. Carl, Jody's father, believes in strict discipline. d. His mother sympathizes with Jody but cannot put her feeling into words.

3. Read the passage beginning "Jody never waited for the triangle to get him out of bed after the coming of the pony." In this passage the author has described many things which appeal to our senses. That is, we hear, or see, or feel what he tells us about. Find some illustrations of appeals to each sense.

(Example: Sound--"The turkeys, roosting in the tree out of coyotes' reach, clicked drowsily.")

COMPOSITION

1. Steinbeck is noted for his natural dialogue. Try to write a short paragraph containing dialogue between two people. If you like, write a conversation that might have taken place between Jody and his father after the pony's death. Can you make it sound natural?

2. Write a paragraph giving a description of Mrs. Tifflin (similar in content to those of Billy and Jody).

FURTHER READINGS

You might like to read the rest of The Red Pony. The other two chapters are: "Leader of the People," and "Great Mountains." Pastures of Heaven is a collection of Steinbeck stories you might enjoy. ("Molly Morgan" is in this book and you will enjoy it.) "Breakfast" (taken from the novel Grapes of Wrath) is reprinted in some volumes of Steinbeck's stories.